

# BOTULINUM TOXIN INJECTION INSTRUCTIONS

Botulinum toxin injections block certain chemical signals from nerves, mostly signals that cause muscles to contract. The most common use of these injections is to temporarily relax the facial muscles that underlie and cause wrinkles, such as:

- Frown lines between the eyebrows
- Crow's-feet, the lines that fan out from the corners of the eyes
- Forehead furrows, the horizontal lines that form when you raise your eyebrows

In addition to these cosmetic procedures, which simply improve your appearance, botulinum toxin injections have also been used to treat conditions that affect how your body functions. Examples include:

- **Cervical dystonia.** In this painful condition, your neck muscles contract involuntarily causing your head to twist or turn into an uncomfortable position.
- **Lazy eye.** The most common cause of lazy eye is an imbalance in the muscles responsible for positioning the eye. This can result in crossed eyes.
- **Muscle contractures.** Some neurological conditions, such as cerebral palsy, can cause your limbs to pull in toward your center. In some cases, these contracted muscles can be relaxed with botulinum toxin injections.
- **Hyperhidrosis.** In this condition, excessive sweating occurs even when the temperature isn't hot and you're not exercising. In some people, the sweat literally drips off their hands.
- **Chronic migraine.** If you experience migraines more than 15 days a month, botulinum toxin injections may help reduce headache frequency.
- **Bladder dysfunction.** Botulinum toxin injections can also help reduce urinary incontinence caused by an overactive bladder.

## Risks

Botox injections are relatively safe when performed by an experienced doctor. The most common side effects include swelling or bruising at the injection site, headache or flu-like symptoms. If the injections aren't placed correctly, the medication may spread into adjacent tissues and cause problems such as:

- Eyelid droop
- Cockeyed eyebrows
- Crooked smile
- Dry eye or excessive tearing

Although very unlikely, there is a possibility that the effect of botulinum toxin may spread to other parts of the body and cause botulism-like signs and symptoms. Call your doctor right away if you notice any of these effects hours to weeks after receiving Botox:

- Muscle weakness all over the body
- Vision problems
- Trouble speaking or swallowing
- Trouble breathing
- Loss of bladder control

Doctors generally recommend against using Botox when you're pregnant or breast-feeding, since the effects on the baby aren't known.

### **How You Prepare**

Your doctor will need to know if you've received any type of botulinum toxin injections within the past four months. If you take blood thinners, you may need to forgo these medications for several days before your injection, to reduce your risk of bleeding or bruising. Your doctor also needs to know if you take muscle relaxants, sleeping aids or allergy medications.

### **What you can Expect**

#### *Before the procedure*

Although most people tolerate the injection discomfort well, you may want your skin to be numb beforehand. Several options are available, including:

- **Injections.** Your doctor can inject a numbing medication into your skin.
- **Cream.** A prescription cream can be applied 60 to 90 minutes before the procedure.
- **Cold spray.** A blast of very cold air is directed at the skin for about 10 seconds. The numbness only lasts a few seconds.

#### *During the procedure*

Your doctor uses a thin needle to inject tiny amounts of botulinum toxin into your skin or muscles. The number of injections needed depends on many factors, including the extent of the area being treated. Botox injections are usually done in a doctor's office.

#### *After the procedure*

Expect to resume your normal daily activities right after the procedure. Take care, though, not to rub or massage the treated areas. This can cause the toxin to migrate to a different area.